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SUBJECT: EMBASSY VIENNA ENGAGEMENT ON WOMEN'S ISSUES

REF: 09 STATE 124579

¶1. The following is Embassy Vienna's response to reftel request for information on engagement on women's issues.

¶2. The Embassy engages on a diverse range of women's issues in Austria, including trafficking in persons, the empowerment of Muslim women, and women's access to the labor market. Success stories include the International Visitors' Program, which has sent numerous women leaders identified by the embassy to the U.S., as well as a conference on trafficking and another for women business leaders. The Embassy also engages GOA leaders on matters of common interest regarding women's issues.

¶3. The Embassy works with GOA officials to combat trafficking in persons in Austria, which is both a transit and destination country. In drafting the trafficking in persons report for Austria, Post works with GOA officials across ministries as well as Austria's Task Force on Trafficking. In January, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security will co-host with the Austrian Ministry of Interior a workshop to promote greater cooperation in Southeast Europe against trafficking. In spring 2008 the Embassy hosted a program highlighting trafficking issues in Austria, and in 2009 the Embassy sent an NGO leader active on trafficking issues facing African women in Austria on a young leaders IV program. The Embassy also has contact with the anti-trafficking agency UN.GIFT, and the Vienna branch of the International Organization for Migration.

¶4. Another priority for the Embassy is the empowerment of Muslim women. In 2007 the Embassy sponsored a conference with the group Women Without Borders, uniting women of different faiths. In 2009 the Embassy held an event with the women's organization Fatima attended by Economics Ministry State Secretary Christine Marek. Fatima is dedicated to helping young women enter the labor market. In February, the Embassy will arrange a speaking engagement by the only female publisher in Yemen.

¶5. The Embassy engages with Austrian officials on global issues of common interest. Austria, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, supported a September 2009 U.S. resolution to protect women in conflict zones. The Embassy also assisted the Minister for Women's Affairs in planning for her visit to the March UN conference commemorating the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Women's Conference.

¶6. The Embassy is looking for new ways to be involved in women's issues, through engagement with government officials and interaction with the public through the use of programs or new media. The Embassy is planning a DVC for its annual commemoration of International Women's Day to include a representative from the State Department Office of Global Women's Issues. The Embassy hosted a roundtable with the Austrian Labor Chamber on women's issues in 2007 and may hold similar events with other women leaders in the future.

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